

STARK APPLAUDS HOUSE PASSAGE OF FEDERAL EMPLOYEES PAID PARENTAL LEAVE BILL

Thursday, 04 June 2009

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WASHINGTON & Rep. Pete Stark (D-CA) today praised the House passage of H.R. 626, the Federal Employees Paid Parental Leave Act, on a 258-154 vote. The bill responds to the needs of tens of thousands of working families in the federal government by providing 4 weeks of paid parental leave for the birth, adoption, or fostering of a child. The text of Rep. Stark's floor statement is below.

"Madam Speaker, I rise today in support of H.R. 626, the Federal Employees Paid Parental Leave Act of 2009. As a long-time advocate of paid family leave, I believe our nation's largest employer & the U.S. Government & must also be our nation's model employer and set a progressive example for healthy workplace policy. The legislation on the floor today will provide real security to those who serve our nation's government and their families.

"The 1993 Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA) was landmark legislation that established job-protected leave and it has helped millions of workers care for their families without fear of losing their job. The FMLA, however, requires only unpaid leave, and many workers must choose between taking leave to care for their families or not paying their bills. Research has shown that nearly 75 percent of FMLA-eligible workers do not take leave because they cannot afford it. Even before the hardship caused by the current recession, millions of workers could not access family or medical leave because of financial constraints. Paid leave is a vital resource to help workers balance their family and work obligations.

"Paid parental leave provides benefits well beyond the purely monetary. It also benefits our society as a whole. A 1999

report by the President's Council of Economic Advisers found that since 1969, children have lost 22 hours per week with their parents. Studies have shown that increased parental involvement and care giving are linked to gains such as shorter hospital stays, improved behavior, and higher educational achievements for their children. Providing paid parental leave will make leave more accessible, allowing parents to spend more time with their children — clearly an investment worth making.

"Individual states have begun to successfully implement paid family and medical leave programs. Since 2004, my home state of California has led the country in the provision of paid leave and the law has been a boon to both the state's families and businesses. According to a Harvard study published four years after the enactment of California's paid leave policy, California had a lower rate of foreclosures than other states due to income loss arising from the need to care for a household member. We can and should replicate this success nationwide.

"It is the responsibility of the Federal government to take the lead in the promotion of workers' economic security and family-friendly policies, which is why I am pleased to lend my full support to the Federal Employees Paid Parental Leave Act. Providing parental leave to federal workers is an important first step toward what must be our ultimate policy goal of providing paid family and medical leave to all workers, and I look forward to the day when all workers have the chance to care for their families and still be able to pay the bills."

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